

Background and History of the Texas State Veterans Home at El Paso

May 9, 1997 — Gov. George W. Bush signed Senate Bill 1060, authored by then state Sen. Jerry Patterson. This legislation established the Texas State Veterans Homes program.

May 30, 2002 — The Texas Veterans Land Board issued a request for proposals soliciting the donation of land suitable for Texas State Veterans Homes.

October 23, 2002 — President George W. Bush signed the Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2003 Appropriations Bill into law. Among other things, it authorized the transfer of 42.9 acres of Fort Bliss land to El Paso County. The transferred land is in Northeast El Paso, near Transmountain Road and Gateway North. It is adjacent to the Transmountain Campus of the El Paso Community College and Cohen Stadium, home of the El Paso Diablos baseball team.

September 2002 — The former Fort Bliss land was offered by El Paso County as the site for a Texas State Veterans Home. El Paso County, the City of El Paso, the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce, veterans organizations, health care providers and private industry lent their support to the proposed site.

January 4, 2003 — The Texas Veterans Land Board chose El Paso as the site for a Texas State Veterans Home once additional funding from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs became available. The members of the Texas Veterans Land Board who chose the El Paso site were the VLB Chairman and Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, Jerry Patterson; Col. Ladd Pattillo, USAR (Ret.); and Mr. Mike Ussery.

El Paso was one of only two communities chosen out of 40 candidates from around the state. The most important criteria considered by the Veterans Land Board were:

- The number of veterans over 65 in the service area for the proposed site.
- The distance of the proposed site from an existing Texas State Veterans Home.
- The proximity of the proposed site to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities and services, or the equivalent.

April 4, 2003 — The Veterans Land Board issued an invitation for bids to construct the Texas State Veterans Home in El Paso.

May 15, 2003 — The Veterans Land Board awarded a \$9.7 million contract to Urban Associates, of El Paso, to construct the home. The contract was the largest ever awarded by the Texas General Land Office or Veterans Land Board to a minority-owned firm.

October 20, 2003 — Construction began on the home.

March 25, 2004 — The Veterans Land Board announced the home would be named after U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Ambrosio Guillen, of El Paso, who received a Medal of Honor for heroism during the Korean War.

July 19, 2005 — The Ambrosio Guillen Texas State Veterans Home is dedicated.

The designer for the 77,000-square-foot facility is Graeber, Simmons & Cowan Architects and Engineers, of Austin.

The home has 160 beds, of which 60 will be certified for Alzheimer's care in a separate, secured unit. Residents will have a broad spectrum of health care services, a comprehensive rehabilitation program, special diets, recreational activities, social services and a library.

Because the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs subsidizes a significant portion of a veteran's cost to stay in a Texas State Veterans Home, the daily out-of-pocket rates are well below market average and include the cost of medications. A veteran currently pays \$63-\$74 a day for a semi-private room in a Texas State Veterans Home. The average cost for a semi-private room in a private Texas nursing home is about \$109 a day, which often doesn't include the cost of medications.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will fund 65 percent of construction costs and the Veterans Land Board will fund the remaining 35 percent.

The Ambrosio Guillen Texas State Veterans Home will employ about 150 full-time employees, including registered nurses, licensed vocational nurses, therapists, nurses' aides, laundry and housekeeping staff, activities aides, cooks and dietary staff.

Like all Veterans Land Board programs, Texas State Veterans Homes are self-supporting and cost Texas taxpayers virtually nothing.